



RICK SCOTT
GOVERNOR

September 24, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I am writing on behalf of the millions of Florida families who are being impacted by the Corps' discharges of freshwater from Lake Okeechobee. First and foremost, we invite you and members of your administration to tour impacted areas and see how the federal government's shortcomings have affected families. After a tour, you will no doubt make Lake Okeechobee enhancements more of a priority than what is currently reflected in your budget reductions.

Unfortunately, our state has seen investments in the Lake Okeechobee dike system decrease under your watch. In 2013, you funded maintenance at \$130 million, but your 2014 budget proposes a reduction to \$86 million. This funding reduction is astonishing considering the federal government has yet to deliver on its responsibility of supporting a dike system that can keep families safe while mitigating environmental impacts.

While your administration's proposed budget does not properly prioritize these projects, we will move forward on the state level and engage Congress regarding the Water Resources Reform and Development Act of 2013 (WRRDA). Through the WRRDA bill we will ask Congress to authorize important water restoration projects outlined in the Comprehensive Everglades Restoration Plan (CERP), including the Central Everglades Planning Project (CEPP). These projects will help move more water south through the Everglades ecosystem.

We also need your help in getting the federal government to step up and fulfill its funding obligation to critical water projects already authorized. Congress' pace in providing the funding needed to keep up with Florida's investments is frustrating, at best. To fast track one of these authorized projects, I recently announced the State of Florida is committing \$40 million to the stormwater treatment component of the C-44 project along the St. Lucie River. We cannot wait for federal funding to speed restoration in this watershed. Florida's investment is advancing by two years the completion date for the C-44 project, delivering its much-needed benefits to Florida families and the environment.

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Throughout the Everglades ecosystem, the State has repeatedly stepped forward in investing in restoration efforts ahead of federal spending. We have dedicated close to \$420 million for four critical projects that are ready to move ahead, if the federal government can be relied on to fulfill its commitment to cost-share funding. These are the Biscayne Bay Coastal Wetlands project, C-111 Spreader Canal located near Everglades National Park, the Broward Water Preserve Areas and the C-43 West Reservoir along the Caloosahatchee River.

In addition to investing millions of dollars in projects that address water quantity and flow, Florida has also focused on addressing water quality. In 2012, Florida adopted a historic water quality plan to achieve the stringent water quality standards in the heart of the Everglades. In addition, the state has implemented the most comprehensive nutrient reduction program in the country and recently began its Basin Management Action Plan for Lake Okeechobee. While our work to improve water quality is critical to the region, the state's immediate and overwhelming need is solutions to address water quantity.

At a recent hearing in Stuart, Florida, State Senator Joe Negron raised questions regarding the flexibility of the draining schedule for Lake Okeechobee. The Corps must reevaluate its risk assessment to determine if recent repairs to the dike could provide additional flexibility within the existing lake schedule and reduce harmful discharges to our estuaries. Excuses as to why simple solutions *cannot* be executed undermine our efforts to help families. My fear is that the common sense solutions that local leaders have put forward are falling on deaf ears with your administration. Your oversight is urgently needed. Thus, I am appealing to you to implement these items through any means possible:

- Take the steps necessary to enhance the Herbert Hoover Dike System for Lake Okeechobee.
- Fulfill your cost-match obligations by investing in environmental projects with the state.
- Provide authorization and federal funding to projects ready for implementation.
- Provide flexibility to the State of Florida and local partners to pursue critical projects by providing block grants for the design and construction of the projects.

Should you accept our invitation, you will have an incredible opportunity to see first-hand what can be done with a strong partnership.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
Governor